

At the time of writing our churchyard at Findon is looking especially beautiful with masses of snowdrops and crocuses. The sight of so many delicate flowers in the winter sunshine lifts our spirits and reminds us that Spring is really not that far away.

We are now in the season of Lent at church. It is a time of preparation for the great festival of Easter, when we will celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, with the promise of new life for all who believe in him. The observance of a holy Lent goes back to the very early centuries of Christianity. Initially it was a time of preparation for those being baptised at Easter. Over the years this time of preparation came to include all who follow Christ. Lent lasts for 40 days because this was the number of days Jesus fasted in the wilderness in preparation for his ministry.

Traditionally the church is unadorned during Lent and we do not have any flowers on display. The liturgical colour purple adds a sombre note. But we are not meant in any way to be miserable. Instead, our preparation for Easter is all about spending more time with God and having a valuable period of reflection and self-examination, so that we can draw closer to our Lord.

We often have a bible study group during Lent but this year, as I mentioned in last month's edition of Findon News, we will be having a service of Compline, or night prayer instead. This will take place each Wednesday in March at Findon Church at 7.30pm. It will include a brief reflection. Compline is a particularly lovely service, so if you are not familiar with it, do come and see!

People often give up something for Lent, and if we were to consider doing that, we might usefully ask ourselves what the benefits of would be. If we cut out sweet things to lose weight, that might be good for the waistline, but would it draw us any closer to God? Alternatively, if we were to give up something we enjoyed so that we could perhaps give the money we save to the Turkey/Syria earthquake appeal for example, then such a sacrifice would be in direct obedience to God's command to help our neighbour in need, and so aligns our will with God's. Just a thought! Holy week marks the final week of Lent, and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April we will be celebrating Palm Sunday at both Findon and Patching Churches. If you are going to Findon, you might want to make a note in your diary that bacon butties will be served at the Rectory at 9am and there will be a procession with a donkey to church for the 10am Worship and Praise service. At Patching there will be an Easter Eucharist at 10am and there will be chocolate eggs!

With every blessing for a holy Lent.

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